

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY  
HISTORIC SITE SUMMARY SHEET

Survey # 68-67

Building Date c.1902

Building Name Read-Low House

Location 4722 Riverdale Road, Riverdale, MD

Private/ Residence/ Occupied/ Good/ Inaccessible

DESCRIPTION

The Read-Low House at 4722 Riverdale Road (Lot 17, Block 41, Riverdale Park) is a detached, two-story and attic, frame dwelling on a brick foundation with an irregular plan and a hip roof with overhanging eaves. The house is sited on a single lot on the northwest corner of Riverdale Road and 48th Street in the Town of Riverdale. The house is currently sheathed with asbestos shingles but retains its asymmetrical massing, fenestration and its late Victorian, Queen Anne and Eastlake-inspired decorative details; a wraparound porch with jigsaw brackets, double-hung wood sash, pressed-tin ceilings and molded woodwork.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Read-Low House is significant as an excellent example of the late-Victorian vernacular frame dwellings built in the Riverdale Park subdivision at the turn of the century. The picturesque house, with its elaborately detailed front porch, was among the group of buildings depicted in a turn-of-the-century promotional brochure published by the Riverdale Park Company to promote the suburb. The house has been a handsome and prominent landmark in the community since its completion. The house was built speculatively by the Riverdale Park Company in 1902, and purchased by George B. Read the in October of 1903. Read, an oil salesman and his wife Alice, a clerk at the Department of the Interior, occupied the house until 1921. Throughout those years, the house was known as "Rose Villa" because of a substantial side garden that is no longer extant.

Acreage: 6,000 square feet

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. <sup>PG</sup> 68-67

Magi No.

DOE yes no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic "Rose Villa"

and/or common Read-Low House (preferred)

## 2. Location

street & number 4722 Riverdale Road not for publication

city, town Riverdale vicinity of congressional district 5th

state Maryland county Prince George's

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u>  </u> district	<u>  </u> public	<u>X</u> occupied	<u>  </u> agriculture
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	<u>  </u> unoccupied	<u>  </u> commercial
<u>  </u> structure	<u>  </u> both	<u>  </u> work in progress	<u>  </u> educational
<u>  </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u>  </u> entertainment
<u>  </u> object	<u>  </u> in process	<u>  </u> yes: restricted	<u>  </u> government
	<u>  </u> being considered	<u>  </u> yes: unrestricted	<u>  </u> industrial
	<u>  </u> not applicable	<u>X</u> no	<u>  </u> military
			<u>  </u> museum
			<u>  </u> park
			<u>X</u> private residence
			<u>  </u> religious
			<u>  </u> scientific
			<u>  </u> transportation
			<u>  </u> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Paul C. Low

street & number 4722 Riverdale Road telephone no.:

city, town Riverdale, state and zip code Maryland 20737

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. P G County Courthouse liber 5018

street & number 14735 Main Street folio 289

city, town Upper Marlboro state Maryland

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title NONE

date    federal    state    county    local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

## 7. Description

Survey No. 68-67

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Read-Low House at 4722 Riverdale Road (Lot 17, Block 41, Riverdale Park) is a detached, two-story and attic, frame dwelling on a brick foundation with an irregular plan and a hip roof with overhanging eaves. The house is sited on a single lot on the northwest corner of Riverdale Road and 48th Street in the Town of Riverdale. The house is currently sheathed with asbestos shingles but retains its original asymmetrical massing, fenestration and its late Victorian, Queen Anne and Eastlake-inspired decorative details. Unless otherwise noted, windows throughout the house are original double-hung wood sash.

The house's main (south) facade is three bays wide with a centered main entry. The house's most prominent feature is the elaborately ornamented wraparound porch that shelters the first story of the main facade and southern half of the east facade. The porch has a wooden floor and a shallow hip roof covered with asphalt shingles. Each of the porch's five bays is delineated by simple square-plan supports, a balustrade with square-plan spindles and a simple handrail and large, jigsawn round-arch corner brackets, decorated with a pattern of geometric cutouts.

The western bay of the main facade is composed of a series of shallow, rectangular-plan compound projections terminating at the attic story with a small gable, ornamented with a jigsawn vergeboard. At the first story, the compound projection has a double, 1/1 window facing south and single, narrow, 1/1 windows facing east and west. At the second story, a small shed roof shelters another double, 1/1 window fronted by a shallow balconet. The balconet has square-plan supports and a jigsawn balustrade panel. The attic gable is fenestrated with two small multi-pane casement windows.

The house's main entry is a single, wide, wood and glass paneled door centered on the facade and sheltered by the wraparound porch. Above the entry door at the second story, is a single, 1/1 window. The eastern bay of the main facade contains a double-hung Queen Anne window with colored lights at the first story. The second story of the eastern bay is unfenestrated.

The east (48th Street) facade is three bays wide and has a two-bay section of the wraparound porch at its southern end. The porch shelters a half-round Queen Anne window with colored lights at the southern end of the first story. Roughly centered on the facade, is a shallow, full-height, projecting bay with a rectangular plan and a vergeboard-trimmed attic gable similar to that of the main facade. On this facade, the attic window is semicircular. At the first and second stories, the bay has a double, 1/1 window facing east. There are single, narrow 1/1 windows at the north end of the first story and north and south ends of the second story. At the south end of the bay at the first story there is a narrow wood and glass door providing access to the front porch.

The rear (north) facade is also three bays wide. The easternmost bay projects beyond the main block and projecting from it at the first story is an enclosed shed roof porch below a 2/2 window at the second story. The center bay of the facade is a non-historic, two-story, shed-roof addition to the main block of the house. The addition is flush with the eastern bay and is fenestrated with a 1/1 window at the first story. The western elevation of the addition has a 1/1 window at the second story. The westernmost bay of the north facade has a tall 2/2 window at the first story and a smaller 1/1 sash at the second.

The house's west facade is two bays wide. To the north is a projecting semi-hexagonal bay with large 1/1 windows at both the first and second stories. Adjacent and to the south of the projecting bay and almost centered on the facade are large 1/1 windows.

#### Interior

The interior of the Read-Low House also retains much of its late-Victorian plan and decorative detail. The first floor has an entry/stair hall, two parlors, a large dining room, all with original pressed metal ceilings, wood floor moldings and window and door surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks and panelled doors. The entry/stair hall to the southeast is lighted by two Queen Anne windows; a large rectangular window to the south and a smaller, round-arch window to the east. At the southeast corner of the hall is an open-string U-shaped stair with turned balusters, molded handrail and a square-plan newel with carved panels.

The front (south) parlor and the dining room to the north are separated by a pair of paneled pocket doors. The front parlor has an original or early mantel although its firebox has been enclosed with tile. The dining room mantel has been removed but the room retains its old corner cupboard in the northeast corner. The kitchen remains in the original location at the north east corner of the first floor, but has been modernized and enlarged with the enclosure of the rear porch and the removal of the house's back stair.

The Second floor retains its original configuration of bedrooms of various sizes organized around a long, narrow hall running north-south through at center of the floor. Many of bedrooms also retain their original pressed metal ceilings, molded window and door surrounds, and panelled doors with large single-pane transoms. The hall, which also retains its door surrounds, has been altered with the addition of non-historic wall panelling and acoustical ceiling tiles that have been painted.

The attic, which is accessed by an enclosed stair at the south end of the second floor, contains a finished but essentially undecorated room, lighted by small windows in the south and east attic gables.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. 68-67 PG:

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1902

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The Read-Low House is an excellent example of the late Victorian-vernacular frame dwellings built in the Riverdale Park subdivision and other Washington area suburbs at the turn of this century. The picturesque house, with its elaborately detailed front porch, was among the group of buildings depicted in a turn-of-the-century promotional brochure published by the Riverdale Park Company to promote the suburb. The house has been a handsome and prominent landmark in the community since its completion.<sup>1</sup>

The land on which Riverdale Park was built had been part of the Riversdale Plantation established in 1801 when Henri Joseph Stier, a Belgian aristocrat, purchased 800 acres north of Bladensburg and began to develop a plantation. After Stier's return to Belgium in 1803, completion of the Riversdale mansion and management of the plantation were taken over by his daughter Rosalie and her husband, George Calvert. The Riversdale Plantation became a model of its type, and remained within the Calvert family for three generations.<sup>2</sup> After the death in 1864 of Charles Benedict Calvert (son of Rosalie and George Calvert), a commission was appointed to divide the plantation among his heirs and a 300-acre dower lot, including the mansion and the family burial ground to the northwest, was laid off for Calvert's widow.<sup>3</sup> This 300-acre dower lot (as well as the 175-acre lot adjoining it on the north) was sold by Calvert heirs in 1887 to John Fox, president of the Riverdale Park Company, a New York real estate syndicate which then began to develop the suburb of Riverdale Park.<sup>4</sup>

The land was platted in 1889 by surveyor D.J. Howell. Streets were laid out in a grid pattern, straddling the Washington line of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, which ran north and south through the new community and offered residents easy commuting into the Federal City to the southwest. Park spaces, and circles of green were provided in the plan and parkland was reserved around the Calvert mansion which was to be preserved "as a sacred relic of an era replete with historic memories."<sup>5</sup> Streets were named for the Presidents of the United States, Washington through McKinley, as well as for other distinguished statesmen such as Clay, Lafayette and Beale.<sup>6</sup>

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM  
Statement of Significance (continued)

Survey No. PG: 68-67

Section 8 Page 2

Construction of dwellings began in the early 1890s. All were of frame construction, and reflected the popular taste of the period, as illustrated in house plan catalogs of those years. Some were pyramidal-roof Foursquares, others front-gabled or cross-gabled; many were highlighted by projecting bays or corner towers, and almost all had prominent wraparound porches with jigsaw decorative details. By the turn of the century, the new suburb had approximately 60 dwellings, a Presbyterian church, a handsome Victorian schoolhouse and a railroad station; the latter two public buildings were built by the Riverdale Park Company. There were two general stores, and telephone and telegraph communications were available. Concrete sidewalks were constructed, and sewers were provided for the principal streets.<sup>7</sup> Because of its convenient location, its efficient line of transportation into the City, its primary school, and its picturesque, tree-lined streets, Riverdale Park became one of the most desirable residential suburbs in the Washington area.

The Read-Low House, completed in 1902, was built speculatively by the Riverdale Park Company and purchased by George B. Read in October of 1903.<sup>8</sup> Together with the house on Lot 17, Read also purchased adjacent lots 9, 10 and 16. In its early years, the house had substantial side and rear gardens and was known as "Rose Villa."<sup>9</sup> Read, an oil salesman, and his wife Alice, a clerk at the Department of Interior, occupied the house until 1921.<sup>10</sup> From that date to 1978, when it was purchased by its present owner, the house had numerous owners and tenants and at one time was used as a boarding house. The current owner, Paul Low, has returned it to single-family use.<sup>11</sup>

Notes

<sup>1</sup>Riverdale Park Real Estate Brochure (undated), circa 1904.

<sup>2</sup>See Riversdale, Historic Structures Report, 1979, Part II, History (S.G. Pearl).

<sup>3</sup>Prince George's County Equity Records #475.

<sup>4</sup>Prince George's County Land Records, JWB 8:426, JWB 12:484, JWB 13:614.

<sup>5</sup>Riverdale Park Real Estate Brochure (undated), circa 1904.

<sup>6</sup>Prince George's County Plat JWB 5:747, 688; Riverdale Park Real Estate Brochure (undated), circa 1904.

<sup>7</sup>Riverdale Park Real Estate Brochure, "Riverdale Park" article, source unknown. circa 1899.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
STATE HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY FORM  
Statement of Significance (continued)

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<sup>8</sup>See Prince George's County Assessment Records, E.D. #17, 1902 and Prince George's County Land Records, 15:264.

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Paul Low, the present owner of 4722 Riverdale Road, November 15, 1990.

<sup>10</sup>Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910 Population, Maryland, vol 53. Prince George's County.

<sup>11</sup>See Prince George's County Land Records, 174:135 and 5018:289.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. <sup>PG</sup> 68-67

See Notes, Section #8

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Lot 17, Block 41, Riverdale Park

Quadrangle name Washington East

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Howard S. Berger, Architectural Historian

organization PG County Hist. Pres. Comm.

date May 1990

street & number 4th Floor, CAB

telephone (301) 952-3520

city or town Upper Marlboro

state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438



Chain of Title  
Read-Low House  
4722 Riverdale Road

5018:289 3 Nov. 1978 Deed	Marvin M. and Janice L. Costella to Paul Charles and Linda Low. Grantors convey Lot 17 in Block 41, Riverdale Park. Plat recorded A:42. Same obtained from Bernard and Rita R. Rigas. 26 September 1969, 3778:436.
3778:436 26 Sept. 1969 Deed	Bernard and Rita R. Riggs to Marvin M. and Janice L. Costella. Grantors convey Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Doris E. White, Attorney, et. al., 26 April 1965, 3138:14.
3138:15 26 April 1965 Deed	Doris E. White, attorney for Evelyn W. Gordon, Doris E. White and Bertha Walker to Bernard and Rita R. Rigas. Grantors convey Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from the Somerset Company, 31 August 1939, 543:491.
543:491 31 Aug. 1939 Deed	The Somerset Company to Laurence E. and Bertha Walker. Grantor conveys Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Westvaken Realty Company, 1 March 1939, 529:475.
529:475 1 March 1939 Deed	Westvaken Realty Company to the Somerset Company. Grantor conveys Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from W.A.C. Pettit, 12 May 1937, 485:371.
485:371 12 May 1937 Deed	W.A.C. Pettit to Westvaken Realty Company. Grantor conveys Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Anne S. Holt, 28 January 1932, 485:371.
485:371 28 Jan. 1932 Deed	Ann S. Holt to W.A.C. Pettit. Grantor conveys Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Bertha and Lawrence E. Walker, 28 May 1931, 365:133.
365:133 28 May 1931 Deed	Bertha and Lawrence E. Walker to Ann S. Holt. Grantors convey Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Morgan E. and Beatrice M. Morgan, 6 December 1929, 352:199.
352:199 6 Dec. 1929 Deed	Morgan E. and Beatrice M. Morgan to Bertha Walker. Grantors convey Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Lucy F. and Wylie A. Howard, 2 May 1928, 302:279.
302:279 2 May 1928 Deed	Lucy F. and Wylie A. Howard to Morgan [A.] Morgan. Grantors convey Lot 17 in Block 41. Same obtained from Raymond and Emma Jane Barnes, 10 August 1926, 277:186.

- 2 -

277:186  
10 Aug. 1926  
Deed

Raymond and Emma Jane Barnes to Lucy F. Howard.  
Grantors convey Lot 17 and others in Block 41. Same  
obtained from Ralph S. and Hattie Robert Barnes,  
8 October 1923, 204:49.

204:49  
8 October 1923  
Deed

Ralph S. and Hattie Robert Barnes to Raymond Barnes.  
Grantors convey Lot 17 (and others) in Block 41.  
Same obtained from George B. and Alice P. Read,  
6 October 1921, 174:135.

174:135  
6 Oct. 1921  
Deed

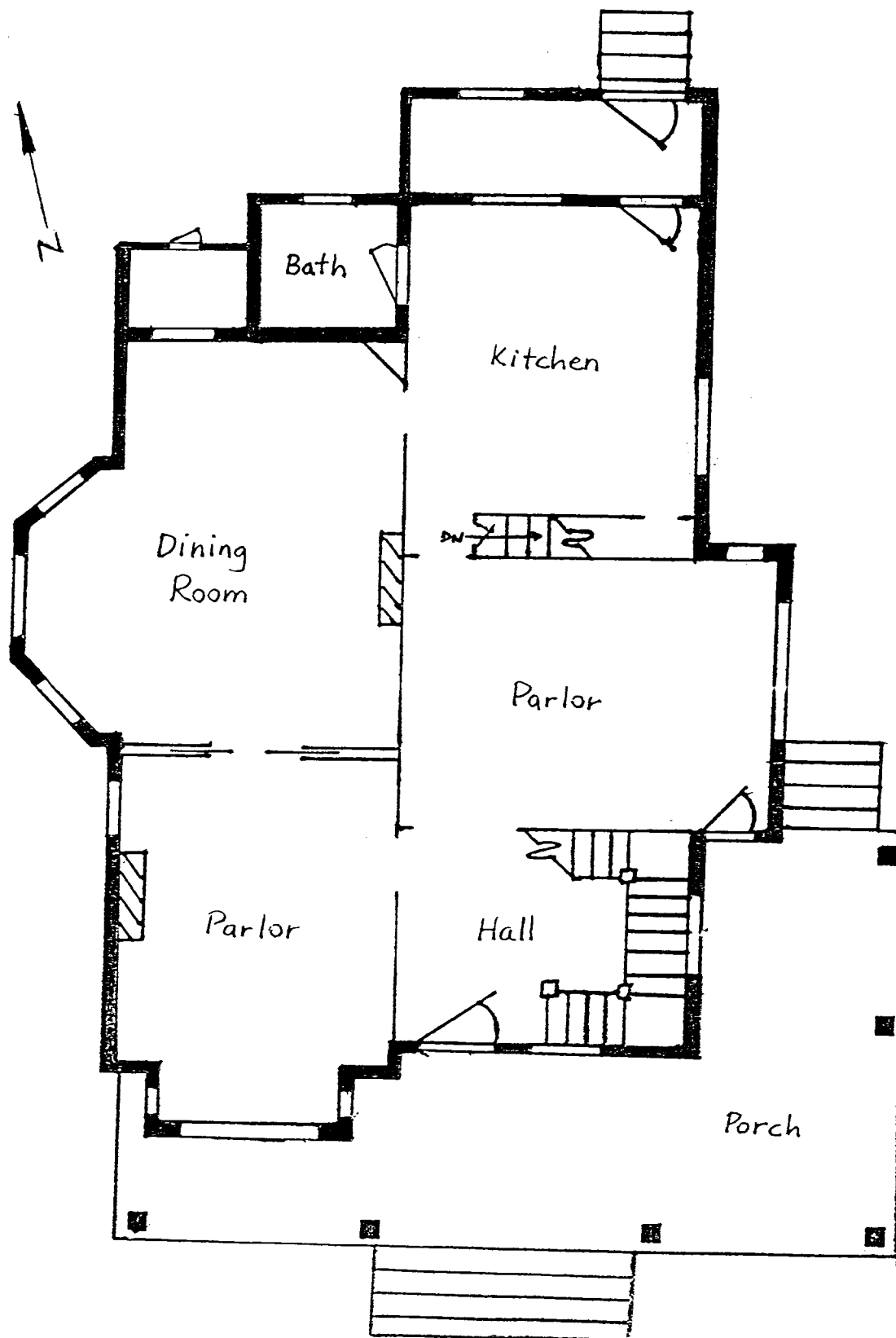
George [B.] and Alice P. Read to Raymond and Ralph S.  
Barnes. Grantors convey Lot 17 (and others) in Block  
41. Same obtained from Riverdale Park Company,  
5 October 1903, 15:264.

15:264  
5 Oct. 1903  
Deed

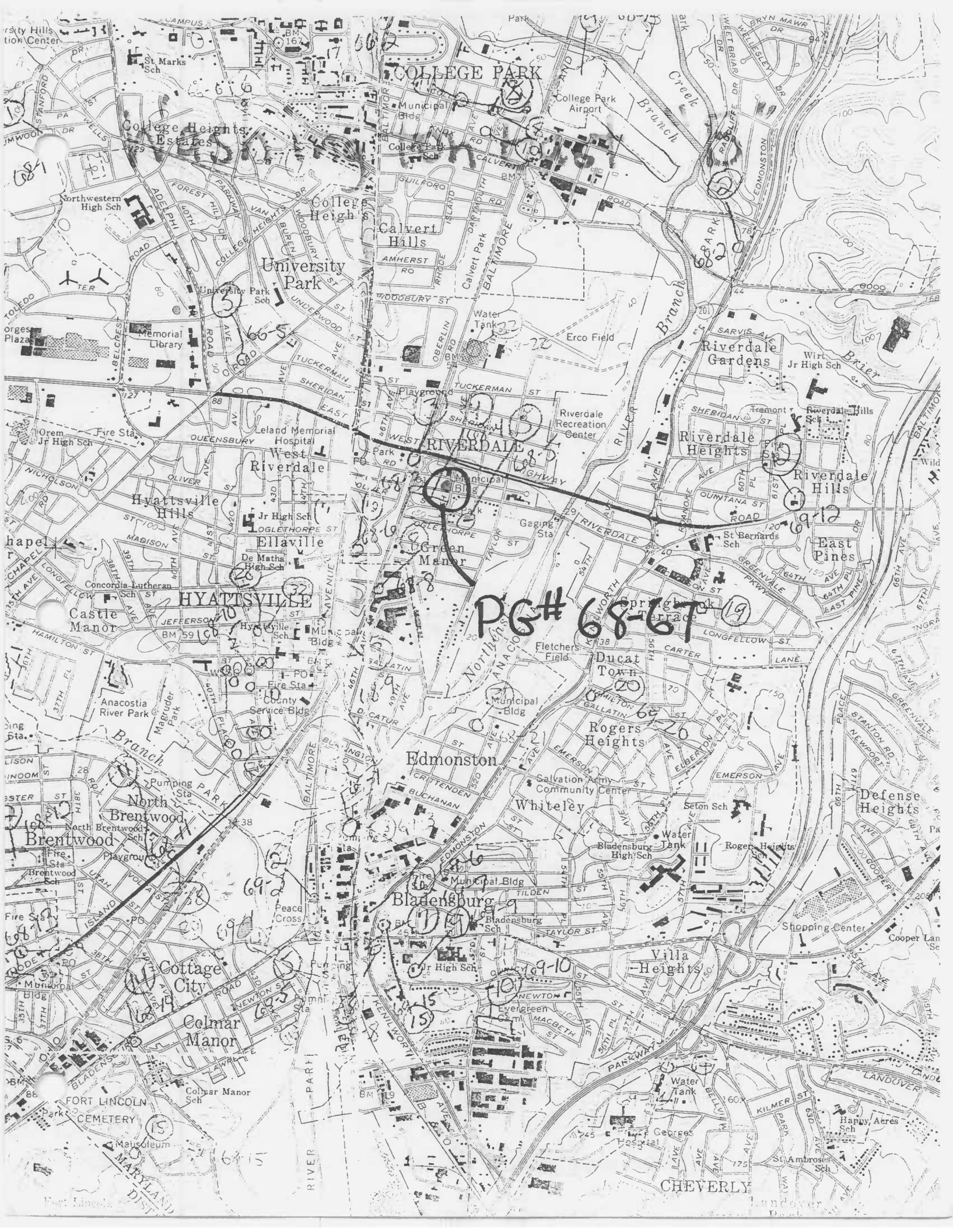
Riverdale Park Company to George B. Read. Grantor  
conveys Lot 17 (and others) in Block 41. To clear  
title, this deed is made.

READ - LOW HOUSE  
4722 Riverdale Road  
Riverdale, Maryland

P.G. # 68-67  
January 1990  
Not to scale









PG# 68-67

READ-LOW HOUSE  
4722 RIVERDALE ROAD, RIVERDALE  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND  
HOWARD S. PERGER

NOVEMBER 1989

FROM SE  
NEG: MHT, ANNAPOLIS  
1 OF 10





HEAD-LOW HOUSE

PG. # 68-67

4722 RIVER ALC ROAD

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

HOWARD S. PERGLER

NOVEMBER 1989

FROM E

2 OF 10



PG#68-67

READ-LOW HOUSE

4722 Riverdale Rd, Riverdale

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

HOWARD S BERGER

NOVEMBER 1989

FROM SOUTHWEST

NEG: MHT, ANNAPOLIS

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PG#68-67

READ-LOW HOUSE  
4722 RIVERDALE ROAD  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND  
HOWARD S. BERGER

NOVEMBER 1989

FROM NW

NEG: MHT, ANNAPOLIS

4 OF 10



READ-LOW HOUSE  
4722 RIVERDALE ROAD  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND  
HOWARD S. BERGER

JANUARY 1990

ENTRY DOOR (INTERIOR VIEW)

5 OF 10





READ-LOW HOUSE

PG#68-67

4722 RIVERDALE ROAD, RIVERDALE

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

HOWARD S. BERGER

JANUARY 1990

MAIN STAIR NEWEL

NEG: M4T, ANNA POLIS

6 OF 10



READ-LOW HOUSE

PS#68-67

4722 RIVERDALE Rd, Riverdale

PRINCE GEORGE'S County, MARYLAND

HOWARD S. BERGER

JANUARY 1990

DETAIL: MANTEL AND CEILING IN  
FRONT PARLOR

NEG: MHT, ANNAPOLIS

7 OF 10



READ-LOW HOUSE

PG#68-67

4722 RIVERDALE RD, RIVERDALE

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND

HOWARD S. BERGER

JANUARY 1990

DETAIL: POCKET DOORS IN SOUTH  
WALL OF DINING ROOM.

NEG: MHT, ANNAPOLIS

8 OF 10



Resd. Low House

4722 Riverdale Rd, Riverdale

Prince George's County

Howard S. Berger

January 1990

Detail: Cupboard and Ceiling  
in NE corner of dining room

neg: MHT, Annapolis

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Read-Low House

4722 Riverdale Rd, Maryland

Howard S. Berger

Jan 1990

Detail. 2nd Floor Hall from south

Neg. M4T, Annapolis

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